



The Online Library of T. Austin-Sparks

Published as a PDF by Austin-Sparks.net
Email: info@austin-sparks.net

In keeping with T. Austin-Sparks' wishes that what was freely received should be freely given and not sold for profit, and that his messages be reproduced word for word, we ask if you choose to share these messages with others, to please respect his wishes and offer them freely - free of any changes, free of any charge (except necessary distribution costs) and with this statement included.

Faithfulness and Truth

by T. Austin-Sparks

Edited and supplied by the Golden Candlestick Trust.

Reading: Rev. 1:12-20; 3:14; 19:11; 20:4-5; 21:5; 22:6.

The first chapter of this book contains a composite presentation of those words - 'faithful and true', or 'faithfulness and truth'. This description of the Lord is in every part some aspect of faithfulness and truth. Every fragment of it could be taken separately and be seen to stand related to this whole matter of faithfulness and truth. His golden girdle about His breasts is His love, His devotion, His zeal for truth. His faithful devotion to truth. His head and hair white as white wool is His faithfulness to true judgments. His eyes as a flame represent again a question of looking right in through every falsehood, pretence, to find the truth, to get at the truth. His feet as of burnished brass... fiery brass symbolises His quest for righteousness and truth. His voice as the sound of many waters is His authority in this matter of truth, and His two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth again is connected with this whole matter of faithfulness and truth. And in that comprehensive presentation He stands before the Church, and in relation to that one matter, everything is dealt with.

There are three general facts here which might just be noted as we go on. Firstly, there is the fact that we are dealing with an ultimate position, that is where the Lord comes to at last; we call it an end-time. We are here dealing with ultimate things. When the last phase has been reached and when that time and place is arrived at, everything is brought up on this ground and determined according to this presentation: faithfulness and truth. Ultimately, at last, that is the question.

The second general thing here is that judgment begins at the house of God. The nations will follow, other realms of earth and hell will come afterward, but as Peter says, "Judgment must begin at the house of God" (1 Pet. 4:17). The Lord is beginning at the house of God this quest for, and judgment in the light of, faithfulness and truth.

And the third thing to be noted is that He moves from the universal to the local, from the whole to its parts. The seven churches represent the whole Church; in figure, the completeness of things. They are all brought into view, but then from the general, the whole, the universal, He begins with the parts and brings it right down to every single individual. Those things are quite patent, and need not be dealt with any more fully.

The Challenge

What we want to get at is this inclusive implication - that is, what does it all amount to? And in answering that, we are answering one of the questions that is in every true heart. What is the Lord doing, what is the Lord after, what is it all about? And the answer, according to what is here in this presentation, is simply this: the Lord is looking for genuineness and reality. They are only other words for faithfulness and truth - purity, practical truth, reality, consistency. At last, in the final summing up of everything, that is the matter upon which the Lord alights, that is the thing for which He looks.

He is the Amen, which is the Verily. We are told that with Him is not the Yea and the Nay, but with Him is the Amen (2 Cor. 1:20); that is, things are definite, are positive, are absolute. There is no mixture, no one thing and the other, but it is just one thing - the Amen, the positive certain reality about which there is no question or doubt or uncertainty. The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness. That is what the Lord is after, and that surely is very clear just now. If ever this were in operation, it is so now. The Lord undoubtedly is bringing everything in the Church - speaking universally now as well as locally - bringing it all to judgment on this one question: the matter of what is absolutely true and genuine and real and positive. This is not what is tradition, not what is doctrine, not what is held in the mind, not what has been followed as the Christian position for so long and generally accepted, but what is absolutely true and real in the life.

You have been taught much, you have inherited much, you have great traditions, you have a lot of light, but the Lord has not come to see how much light we have, or how much truth we have received or held. He has come to see how real that is in the life, just how much a living part of the very constitution and existence of the Church it all is. He will say, "I know... I know..." and you can put a great deal under those [words] "I know all about this, I know all about that, I know what you believe, what you are talking about, what you say, what you profess, what you proclaim. I know, but how much of that is your very life, your being? How much of it has become a matter of life and death with you?" This is faithfulness and truth in a practical way and a living way.

You will be surprised if you look at these messages to the churches and see the place that life and death has all the way through. It seems almost as though it becomes the issue, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead." "I will give thee a crown of life." There is much about life and death, and faithfulness and truth is just that - how much of it is living? That is what it is all about. But I do want that that should get right into us, for that is what the Lord is really doing. It perhaps would seem most obvious if we looked out on traditional Christianity and see how the Lord is having no respect for that, that the place of the greatest traditions of bygone days is not singled out for any favour apart from the public house next door; it all goes up. He is bringing us down away from things, buildings, histories, traditions, and from our forms and our programmes, getting right down - "how much is this your life?" so that we can see objectively. Is not this what the Lord is doing with us? I have no hesitation in saying that I recognise that to be what the Lord is doing with me.

There is a tremendous amount of truth, teaching, "light", as we call it, things said. Now then, measure up. How are you standing up to it? When you are put to it, how does it stand up to it? How

do the things that you believe stand up to the real test? There is no way of proving this except by practical testing. This cannot be resolved into a mental matter; that is, we cannot say, "I believe so and so, I stand upon such and such ground", and that be the final answer. That ground, that belief, has got to be put to the most intense test of real fire and fiery trial. Now then, under the practical application of the fire in our experience, how easily can we part with the things that we did so strongly believe? How much must we say after all, "Well, I cannot help it, but the two are one, the truth and my life are one, and they cannot be separated". We are all being put to it. Is all this that we have been hearing for years true after all? We have heard a tremendous amount; is it true? Everything that would seem to support it from the outside being broken places; all the structures, everything related to it, but not essential to it, being cut off. And what is happening to us? We are being stripped naked of everything but the thing that we have believed, heard, received; the thing that we thought was reality, truth, and we are now stuck with this: what is the value of it to us? What does it mean to us? Is it real or is it hollow and unreal?

Now, we may pass through phases when it does seem to be unreal because of the phase through which we are passing, but in the long run, how do we come out of this? Do we find that, after all, we cannot go back upon that position? It is not just our tenacity, it is something deeper than our minds, our mental resolve. It is something that belongs to our innermost life.

That is what the Lord is doing with us. He is not letting us get away with that. He is shutting us up to that issue. I am not talking about theories now. I know what I am talking about. The Lord is shutting us up and He is shutting His people up today from things that have carried them on, to the absolute reality of their position with Him. It is an ultimate position: faithfulness, truth, genuineness, reality, the thing which is Life. If the Lord answered a lot of our prayers, it would release us from this challenge. We would be out in a lot of things, but He is just for the time being not doing that. He is holding us to this.

With the situation in the Revelation, it amounted to this. These churches had received a great deposit of truth, of revelation. They were the churches in Asia, and we know how great a revelation had come to the apostle Paul, a greater revelation than to any other apostle, and he was mainly used to bring the churches in Asia into being. We have Ephesus right at the beginning, and we know what a deposit the Ephesians had of Divine revelation, and now the Lord has come back and He is challenging as to the truth that has been received; that for which they really are responsible. How much of all that which has come through the years, how much of it has got inside and become the very substance of the being of the church? How much of it is wonderful doctrine, wonderful teaching, wonderful revelation, something more, perhaps, than others have had, but the Lord is not content with that. How much of it is your life? That is His question.

Are you asking, "What is the Lord doing with me? Why is He taking this way with me? Why is He cutting me off, shutting me up from so much I long to be doing?" Why has He marked out this period in which we are so much cut off from the expansive, the extensive? Why is it that the Lord has for the time being imprisoned us in this way and is not answering many of our prayers? They may be answered yet, but He is not answering them in our experience just now concerning outward things in our lives. It is because He comes as the Faithful and True to challenge all that we have been taught, all that we have received.

He is asking, "Are you individually and as local companies really up to the standard of all that you have received? You have had a great revelation of the Cross: what about it? Is the Cross a practical reality, a working reality? You have had a great revelation of the Church; is it a practical working reality or is it some truth that you hold, something that you believe in and adhere to?" And so much

more has come. What is the measure of it all that is now being expressed? It is a great responsibility. And so He challenges on that one issue.

He brings it right down to the individual: "If any man...", "he", "to him...". That is the presentation of the challenge.

Our Reaction

Then there is our reaction. He calls for an attitude, a new attitude. "To him that overcometh...". There may be numerous things that have got to be dealt with, and let me say that the many things mentioned in these messages only represent spiritual principles. You may not feel that they really apply literally in our case. The doctrine of Balaam, that woman Jezebel, and such mysterious things, you say that does not relate to us; but in principle it does. It would not be difficult for me almost in a sentence to indicate how Jezebel is in very evangelical assemblies today and how Balaam is here in principle. The point is that the Lord brings this to us and calls for a new attitude towards the light we have received, towards the deposit that is with us, and the dealing with anything that makes for unreality and indefiniteness that results in our falling short and being a contradiction to the great revelation that has come. Oh, it is a very serious question for us to take up collectively. I am not going to discuss the question as to whether we are now where we once were, but that which the Lord has given to us does require that we should be in a strong position, an effective position, a living position. We have just got to see if we are up to the standard which the Divine revelation given to us would require and would justify Him in expecting it.

"To Him that Overcometh"

Then, finally, when we have given Him our reaction, the one that He is looking for - "to him that overcometh", there is "I will..." and something added in, something more than we have ever received before, something wonderful. Mysterious things are said, but again they are great Divine spiritual realities, and you see that that final position of absolute transcendence and victory and glory, is for those who take up this question of being abreast of Divine expectation in view of the Divine deposit. In other words more simply, "The Lord has given that which means that I ought to be in a certain position, we ought to be in a certain position, and I am going to see to it, that so far as I am concerned, I am in that position, and as a company we are in that position", and then the Lord adds something very wonderful to the overcomer who takes that position. That is what is here.

It should not be oppressive, but it is the challenge, and we do want to know what the Lord is doing with us. He is testing us out on all that has been from Himself. The future depends upon that; the great future depends upon our measuring up and giving the Lord the response for which He is seeking. May we have grace to do that. One does not want to put a burden, a strain, in these days which are strenuous, but is the Lord looking for something that is more in the measure of His right and proper expectation, in view of all that He has given and revealed?